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ABSTRACT

As part of a Unesco study of its member states, this case study reviews Sri Lanka's services for the education of disabled persons. The case study reports on the establishment of the Special Education Unit at the Ministry of Education in 1971, at which time the government undertook direct responsibility for providing educational opportunities for handicapped children. Progress in the provision of educational opportunities is documented by the increasing number of special school and integrated education programs. Integration of handicapped children with normal children in the same school setting is regarded as the most important contribution to normal living. The case study focuses on special education policy, legislation, administration/organization, special education provision, finance, research and development, and priorities. (JDD)

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A Case Study on Special Education

in

SRI LANKA

UNESCO
1988

EC232682

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A Case Study on Special Education
in
SRI LANKA

Prepared for Unesco by

The Ministry of Education, Special Education Branch

ED.88/WS/13

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COUNTRIES WHO HAVE CONTRIBUTED CASE STUDIES

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YUGOSLAVIA

Preface

With a view to updating information on the present situation of special education in Member States in 1986-1987, Unesco undertook a review of the legislation, administration and financing of facilities and services for the education of disabled persons.

The information was collected in two ways.

First, sixty countries from the different regions of the world completed a questionnaire; their replies were reproduced and analysed, and can be found in a Unesco document: *A Review of the Present Situation of Special Education*. Second, twelve countries prepared each a case study which further elaborates and complements information contained in the questionnaire. These have been reproduced individually.

While the compiled information provides an indication of progress made since the first study published by Unesco in 1971, *A Study of the Present Situation of Special Education*, it is also intended to provide a data base from which future programmes could grow. Thus the information will be of assistance to policy-makers, planners, administrators and specialists in special education and will hopefully foster the exchange of experiences and lead to increased education provision for disabled persons.

The case studies, prepared under contract with Unesco, should be considered as information documents requiring continual revision and updating. A list of the countries which contributed case studies, as well as those which replied to the questionnaire appear on the preceding page.

The views expressed in this study are those of the individuals concerned with its preparation and do not necessarily reflect those of Unesco.

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INTRODUCTION

Sri Lanka has a distinct national and cultural identity which can be traced back through more than 2500 years of recorded history. It has a long tradition of taking care of the handicapped members of society. It is recorded in the Chronicles (Mahawansa) that as far back as the fourth century B.C. special institutions had been established under royal patronage to take care of the disabled persons. The Buddhist and Hindu cultures promote care of the weak and the destitute and it is believed that the merit thus acquired will ensure a more propitious future birth.

However, recurrent invasions by European colonialists led to the destruction of the indigenous institutions. The missionaries who arrived with the colonialists replaced the traditional system with European educational practices. The existing residential institutions for the handicapped were introduced by the Christian missionaries. The first residential institution was established in 1912 in a suburb near the capital, Colombo, and blind and deaf children were enrolled to be educated. The number of such institutions had increased to four by the middle of the 20th century. The cultural revival which began after independence was achieved in 1948 led the Buddhist leaders to create institutions for deaf and blind Buddhist children in the rural areas. As a result, four more such institutions had been founded by the end of the 1960s.

The impact of this system of special institutions on mass education for the handicapped was minimal. Only a selected few were benefited and the vast majority remained in their homes without any opportunity for education or social adjustment.

The situation underwent a major change in 1971 with the establishment of the Special Education Unit at the Ministry of Education. For the first time, the Government undertook direct responsibillity for providing educational opportunities for handicapped children. Significant progress in the provision of educational opportunities was made during the 1970s. The number of special schools gradually increased to 21 and numerous integrated education programmes were developed. A new interest has been generated in the public today and it is clear that the foundation for the mass education of the handicapped has been laid.

Geographical and demographical sketch

Area:	65,610 km^2
Population:	14.99 million (1981 census) 15.42 million (estimate for 1983)
Density:	238 (1983)
Literacy rate:	86.5 (1981 census)
Primary school enrolment (grades 0-5):	2,151,185 (1983 school census)

I. SPECIAL EDUCATION POLICY

I.1 Normalization is the policy objective as regards education of handicapped children in Sri Lanka. This means that these children are pvodided with a social environment bearing the closest possible resemblance to normal conditions. Integration of handicapped children with normal children in the same school setting is regarded as the most important contribution to normal living. The policy of integration had its earliest support with the publication of Dr Jeane R. Kenmore's 'Survey Report on the Education of Blind Children in Ceylon' in 1966. It contended that integrated programmes would go a long way towards solving the problem of educating visually handicapped children. The special school system then existing could not meet the needs of the country nor absorb most of the children living in rural areas. The report also emphasized the fact that integration had a greater potential for social development. In 1967, expert assistance was made available by the American Foundation for the Overseas Blind (AFOB) to enable the Ministry of Education to start integrated programmes. Teachers were trained and the first integrated programme was initiated in 1968 with the enrolment of 17 visually handicapped children to regular schools at primary level.

Implementation of the policy gained ground year by year with the availability of trained teachers from the specialist training course established for the purpose. The programme has now spread to most of the regions of the country.

In 1971, the Committee appointed by the Permanent Secretary and Director General of Education to report on special education for exceptional children recommended the extension of the integrated programme to other categories of handicapped children. Hence, the policy

was adopted to expand the services for hearing-impaired children and the mentally handicapped children, depending on the availability of specialist trained teachers. The decision to expand the integrated programme was motivated by the successful implementation of the educational programme for visually handicapped children. Parental backing was forthcoming from the outset which strengthened the implementation of the programme for the integration of handicapped children into the regular school system.

However, in the initial stages, vested interests in the special school system did not favour this trend. It was interpreted as an effort to destroy the already established school system. The result in fact was the provision of educational opportunities for a large group of children who had not benefited from the existing system. Now most of the visually handicapped children in special schools eligible to sit for G.C.E. (Advanced Level) examinations are transferred to normal schools so that they can share the more extensive educational resources.

I.2 Parallel efforts are being made to encourage diversification of educational programmes for handicapped children. A large percentage of children do not benefit from integrated programmes for the following reasons:

- severity of the disability;
- complexity of the disability;
- non-availability of positive home background or parents' decision (small percentage).

Expansion of the special system is shown hereunder.

Year	No. of special schools
1948	4
1970	7
1986	21

All these schools are registered as 'assisted schools' by the Ministry of Education and are entitled to receive considerable aid.

There are many other institutions under the aegis of other State departments such as the Social Services Department and Probation

Department. At the request by such institutions the Ministry of Education has taken steps to make available the services of itinerant specialists wherever possible for school-age children.

I.3 At the inception of the integrated programme for visually handicapped children, investigations were carried out to identify children for educational placement. This detection programme was accompanied by an expansion of services. Hence, early intervention in educational rehabilitation has received the attention of the Ministry of Education since 1968. At present a programme for early detection, identification and educational rehabilitation is being implemented, with UNICEF financial assistance, on an organized basis in three of the twenty-four administrative districts. Trained volunteers undertake house-to-house surveys to report on suspected cases of disabilities not receiving proper care and attention, due either to the ignorance or poverty of parents.

Polyclinics are subsequently organized at village level and children suspected of disabilities are examined by medical and para-medical personnel to determine the nature of the problem. After initial assessment by the team of professionals, those children found to be suffering from a disability are provided with special education by suitable school placement. The children are supplied with the necessary equipment and appliances. Parent counselling services are made available by volunteers at guidance centres set up for the purpose. Home counselling services are provided for handicapped pre-school children by the itinerant specialist teachers.

The Ministry of Education has also embarked on a pilot programme to admit handicapped children to special units in ordinary schools at a lower age. This is a novel development. Early training by specialist personnel will help the handicapped children to overcome adjustment problems and develop sufficient skills to cope with the non-disabled children in the same class.

I.4 Teacher training is considered a priority area. The main obstacle to the nation-wide expansion of special education is the non-availability of trained personnel in the field. In 'Project Document: Education for Handicapped Children in Sri Lanka - 1986', it is stated that the 'development objective of the project is to develop special educational services mainly through a more effective teacher training programme to

meet the needs of handicapped children in Sri Lanka.' Intake for training has since been increasing.

I.5 *Prevailing professional and community attitudes.* The policy of integration has received acceptance from the community although the innovation was brought about by professionals.

There are waiting lists for educational placement and parents are prepared to postpone admission of their children to schools until integrated programmes are established.

Voluntary organizations such as the Sri Lanka Council for the Deaf refer school-age children to the Special Education Unit for placement in integrated programmes.

There is a growing trend for specialists in the Health Department or the Medical College to refer disabled children to officials of the Ministry of Education for placement in integrated units although no formal inter-departmental co-ordination exists.

In certain schools, parents have taken steps to provide infrastructure facilities for special units in ordinary schools. In the absence of a system of helpers or assistants, many mothers of children have volunteered to assist teachers in the integrated programmes.

In one district, a special fund has been created to assist needy families of handicapped children who are attending integrated programmes.

The interest shown by parents has motivated principals to open up their schools to handicapped children. A general awareness has been created throughout society and the school authorities accept that educational opportunities for handicapped children should be made available in the same way as for the non-disabled children. The earlier notion that they should be confined to a segregated setting is fast dying out.

II. LEGISLATION

The implementation of special education provision is discussed under the following sub-heads:

(a) Legislation by Parliament;

(b) Papers approved by the Cabinet;

(c) Circulars issued by the Secretary of Education.

II.1 Education Ordinance: (Chap. 185, Ceylon Legislative Enactments, Vol. VII)

('An Ordinance to make better provision for Education and to revise and consolidate the Law relating there to')

The following sections indicate the legal situation in relation to provision of education in Sri Lanka.

Section 37 (2)	-	Power of Minister to make Regulations for education of children.
Sections 39 and 40	-	Provision for establishing schools on estates.
Section 43	-	Parents of children between 5 years and 14 years resident on estates to cause children to attend school.
Section 56	-	Power of magistrate to order child to be sent to certified industrial school.

The ordinance does not provide for effective compulsory education. However, the ordinance gives the Minister the power to make regulations for providing education for children, which in effect means that education of handicapped children is covered by legislation in a general way.

II.2 Employment of Women, Young Persons and Children Act.

(Act 47 of 1956 Ceylon Legislative Enactments 1986, Supplement Vol. 2 Part 1)

Section 34	-	Child for purposes of the Act means a person under the age of 14 years.
Section 7	-	Prohibition of employment of children in industrial undertakings.
Section 9	-	Minimum age for employment at sea - 15 years.
Section 17	-	Restriction on employment of children attending schools.

This act regulates the employment of children and indirectly safeguards the right of the child to go to school.

II.3 The Education Ordinance of the Revised Legislative Enactments in Sri Lanka.

Chap. 185 section (2) a, makes the following provision: 'The Minister of Education is empowered to make regulations in respect of the establishment, taking over, transfer, continuance, discontinuance, grading, staff and equipment of schools for the education of the blind, deaf, defective or epileptic children.'

This provision in effect covers the provision of education for all categories of handicapped children. It also gives the Minister of Education full power over education of the handicapped.

II.4 Code of Regulations for Assisted English Schools

(The reprint of the regulations published in Oct. 31, 1944 embodying amendments subsequently approved by the State Council and ratified by His Excellency The Governor)

Chap II 44A, makes the following provision:

'The grant payable to schools conducted for the education of blind, deaf, defective or epileptic children shall be 75 per centum of the salaries of the approved number of teachers, such salaries being determined according to the scales specified in the appendices for the purpose of this regulation, the approved number of teachers shall be calculated on the basis of one teacher for every 10 units of average attendance.' An amendment to this provision ensures full payment of salaries of teachers.

II.5 Cabinet Paper 1969 - on Ministry of Education, Cabinet Memorandum. No. 255

This ensures the following:

1. Acceptance of the policy of integration of handicapped children into regular schools.
2. The payment of an additional allowance for teachers of handicapped children which is calculated on the basis of 10 per cent of the basic salary of the teacher concerned.
3. Appropriate expenditure on education.

II.6 Cabinet Paper 1985 - on Ministry of Education, Cabinet Memorandum No. 643

This ensures the creation of posts for the Braille press of the Ministry of Education and the recruitment of employees for the Braille press. The posts thus created are as follows:

Production Manager	- one post
Senior Printing Press Operator	- one post
Printing Assistant	- one post
Stereo-typists	- two posts

II.7 Cabinet Paper - 1986 on Ministry of Education, Cabinet Memorandum No. 687

This ensures that those teachers belonging to district services who complete special courses of teacher training for the teaching of handicapped children are exempt from the district service requirement.

II.8 Administration Circular 2 dated 20 December 1971

This ensures the smooth working of the integrated programme of education and conveys acceptance of the policy to admit visually imparied children to ordinary schools. The following matters are referred to:

- admission of visually handicapped children;
- duties of the itinerant teacher;
- duties of the principals of schools;
- payment of a travelling allowance for itinerant teachers;
- the administrative responsibility of the Regional Education Department.

II.9 Administration Circular 1985/2 dated 15 May 1985

The following matters have been dealt with:

- Policy decision to admit handicapped children to normal schools is reiterated.
- The determination of suitability of children for educational placement lies with the specialist teacher and the principal of the school and the admissions are made with the approval of the Regional Director of Education.
- A comprehensive record should be maintained on every handicapped child.

- The officers of the Special Education Unit of the Ministry and the Regional Department will supervise the programmes.
- Principals of schools should ensure the provision of suitable classrooms for special untis for handicapped children.
- The decision to integrate the child should be made after careful consideration by the principal in consultation with the specialist teacher and the supervisor of special education.

II.10 Coverage of legal provision

There is a broad framework which ensures the provision of education for all categories of children. It does not specify the exact nature of services to be provided. The Ministry of Education, for purposes of providing special education, recognizes the following categories of handicapped children:

- children with intellectual limitations (mentally handicapped);
- children with impaired vision;
- children with impaired hearing;
- children with language and speech problems;
- children with behaviour problems;
- children with non-sensory physical impairments.

This classification appears in the 1976 report of the Special Committee of the Ministry of Education Officials appointed by the Secretary of Education to examine existing provisions and to recommend improvements.

II.11 Major influences

Terminology: The traditional terminology used in the legislative enactments has been replaced in educational terminology and in the implementation of special education programmes. The change is a result of enlightened professional influence on the administration of special education for handicapped children.

II.12 Teacher-pupil ratio

On account of representations made by voluntary organizations managing schools for severely mentally handicapped children, the Minister of Education has taken action to amend the provision in Chap. II 44 A of the Code of Regulations for Assisted Schools as follows: 'For the purpose of

this regulation, the approved number of teachers shall be calculated on the basis of one teacher for every 5 units of average attendance.'

II.13 Legislative measures contemplated for the future

Undoubtedly, there are legal shortcomings in the provision of special education. The law does not enforce compulsory education. It does not specify the type of service to be rendered by the special education authorities. It does not specify anything about the content of curricula.

However, the present policy is to emphasize the universalization of primary education for handicapped children. Many handicapped children are not provided with education and all resources are used to expand services for most handicapped children.

Current legislation calls for expansion of educational provision and this has become the immediate priority. Hence, legislation to cover a wider spectrum is not foreseen at this time.

III. ADMINISTRATION/ORGANIZATION

The services for handicapped children are provided by a number of State departments and voluntary organizations. The type of services rendered by various agencies are listed below in accordance with the various levels at which they are provided.

III.1 Detection and identification of disabilities in children

Department of Health

The following services are provided by medical personnel but are available to only a negligible percentage of handicapped children:

- detection at birth in maternity hospitals by the attending medical personnel;
- detection at district medical offices during periodical visits for inoculation against virus diseases;
- detection at State hospitals in the course of visits for treatment of common health problems;

- detection by private medical practitioners in the course of visits for treatment;
- detection by consulting physicians at consultation clinics.

Follow-up:

- medical and surgical treatment wherever possible;
- correction of disabilities wherever possible;
- parental counselling by doctors at clinics;
- parental counselling by family health workers;
- referral of school-age children to educational authorities for educational placement (no administrative mechanism exists to enforce the requirement).

The Ministry of Education

- surveys of handicapped children for educational placement;
- detection by special teachers;
- detection by regular teachers;
- parent counselling by specialist teachers and ordinary school teachers;
- home counselling services by special education teachers.

Follow-up:

- referral to health authorities for treatment and correction;
- provision of aids to needy children;
- placement for special education;
- referral to voluntary organizations and the Department of Social Services for financial assistance, etc.;
- referral of some children for vocational training.

Department of Social Services

- payment of grants to some voluntary organizations;
- provision of aids and appliances to persons of lower income groups.

Follow-up:

- referral of children to sheltered workshops and institutions;
- referral of children to special schools.

Voluntary organizations

- conduct of medical camps;
- provision of aids and appliances;

- counselling of parents by volunteers;
- assistance to needy parents.

Follow-up:

- referral to health authorities;
- referral to educational authorities.

These services are available in practice only to a negligible percentage of handicapped children. Many are not detected through the organized health system and pilot surveys by voluntary organizations.

III.2 Pre-school training

Ministry of Education

- admission of handicapped children at the age of 4 years and 9 months;
- admission of 3-year-old children to special schools on an experimental basis for early training (the admission age for non-handicapped children is 5 years on 31 January);
- home counselling services for visually handicapped children;
- parental guidance in special integrated programmes or homes by specialist teachers.

Follow-up

- referral to health authorities for medical or surgical treatment or preventive action;

Department of Social Services

- assisting special schools and institutions by giving ad hoc grants;
- provision of financial grants to maintain hostels for handicapped children;
- provision of aids and appliances to adults.

Voluntary organizations

- provision of pre-school training to children;
- guidance services for parents by volunteers;
- provision of specialized services such as audiometric testing for deaf children.

Follow-up

- referral of children to health authorities;

- referral of children to Ministry of Education or special institutions for educational placement;
- provision of aids to needy children.

III.3 Formal school education for handicapped children

Ministry of Education

- placement of blind and physically handicapped children in integrated programmes;
- placement of deaf and mentally handicapped children in special units of regular schools and special schools;
- development of curricula;
- supervision of all special educational programmes;
- provision of teacher training facilities and in-service training for teachers of handicapped children;
- provision of equipment and materials for teachers in integrated programmes;
- provision of aids and appliances for needy children;
- provision of Braille books for all blind children;
- payment of salaries to approved teachers in assisted special schools;
- payment of maintenance and stationary grant to special schools;
- guidance and counselling services for parents;
- visiting teacher service for hospital classes, homes, etc.;
- conduct of surveys for identification and assessment of disabled children.

Follow-up

- referral of handicapped children to the Health Department for medical treatment.

Deaprtment of Social Services

- payment of an allowance for food and lodging to those attending special schools and institutions for handicapped children;
- provision of aids and appliances at subsidized rates;
- registration, supervision and financial assistance to voluntary organizations engaged in correctional and child care work.

Department of Probation and Child Care Services

- treatment and rehabilitation of juvenile offenders and children and young persons in need of correction.

Voluntary organizations

- organization of private rehabilitation institutions;
- provision of materials nad equipment;
- provision of aids and appliances;
- provision of supportive services.

III.4 Higher and technical education for disabled children

Ministry of Higher Education

- facilities for higher education in universities for selected handicapped youths; special concessionary admission requirements exist; blind, hearing-impaired and physically handicapped youths benefit from this facility.

Department of Social Services

- establishment of vocational training centre for handicapped youths;
- payment of a stipend to trainees;
- determination of curricula and issue of proficiency certificates to trainees at the end of course of training;
- assisting vocationally trained youths to find employment.

Voluntary organizations

- vocational training facilities for handicapped children in vocational centres;
- training of mentally handicapped youths in vocational skills.

IV. SPECIAL EDUCATION PROVISION

IV.1 Selection for special education provision

Educational diagnosis is made before educational placement to ascertain the individual educational needs of each child. This diagnosis is based on

medical, para-medical, psychiatric and other relevant data pertaining to the disability of the child. The criteria used in determining the kind of educational provision depend on factors like: age of onset of the disabillity; age of the child; severity of disability; social background of the family; parental attitudes and wishes. The criteria for selection are indicated below under different categories of handicapped children.

Visually handicapped children. The specialist teacher prepares a case study of the child with the following information:

- report from the opthalmologist provided by the parents;
- report from the optician provided by the parents; and
- information from parents documented by the specialist teacher.

Special education is provided for those children with a visual acuity of less than 0.2. There are two types of services in this category:

- programmes for educationally blind children; and
- programmes for low-vision children.

Educationally blind children. Children who need Braille for reading and writing are included in this group. The corrected visual acuity of both eyes of such children is 0.04 or below.

Low-vision children. Visually handicapped children who could be taught through the visual sense are included in this group. The criteria is that the corrected visual acuity of both eyes is from 0.04 up to 0.2.

Hearing-impaired children. A case study of the child is prepared with the following information:

- a medical report from the ENT surgeon/physician provided by the parents;
- an audiogram indicating the hearing level;
- information from parents collected at an interview;
- observation on the behaviour of the child.

Those with a hearing impairment of more than 30 db are given appropriate educational placement.

Mentally-handicapped children. A case study of the child is prepared with the following information:

- a medical report provided by the parents;
- a psychiatrist's report;
- information from parents about the developmental history;
- observation of child behaviour; and

- use of teacher-made tests.

However, as yet the educational provisions are not fully developed. The following factors determine selection for provision:

- availability of educational programmes;
- ability level of the child (profoundly mentally handicapped children are not enrolled in the special units in regular schools or in special day schools).

Slow learners. The following procedure is used for selection:

- observation by regular teachers;
- progress reports on school performance;
- cumulative records on child's overall behaviour and interviews with the children;
- interviews with parents.

Children found to fall behind considerably in the regular class are provided with supplementary services by a specialist teacher.

IV.2 Forms of educational provision

The following charts indicate the educational programmes available for different categories of handicapped children.

Figure 1. Forms of educational provision for visually handicapped children

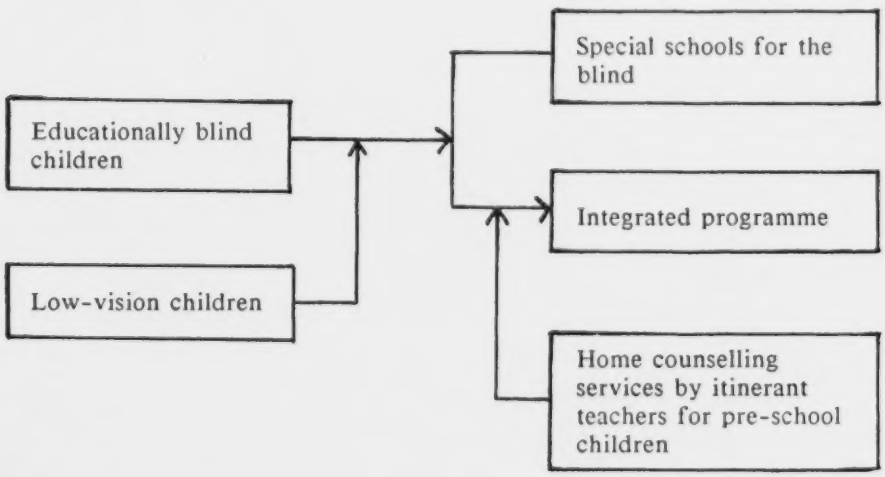

Educationally blind children
Low-vision children
Special schools for the blind
Integrated programme
Home counselling services by itinerant teachers for pre-school children

Figure 2. Forms of education provision for hearing-impaired children

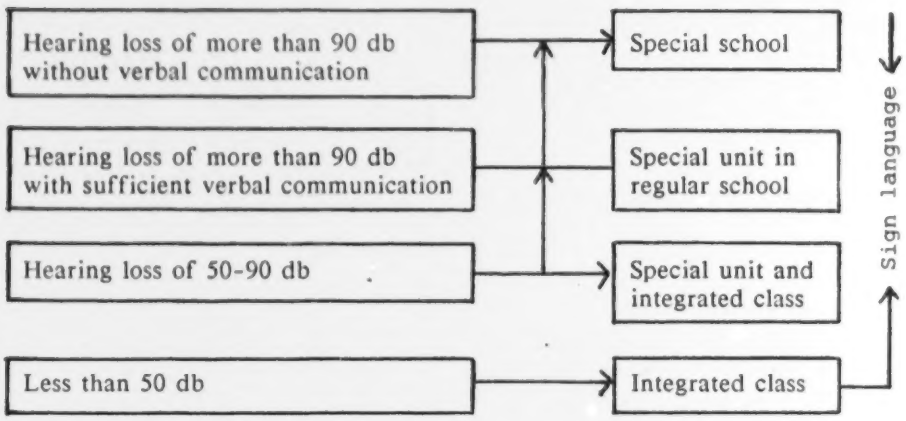

Hearing loss of more than 90 db without verbal communication
Hearing loss of more than 90 db with sufficient verbal communication
Hearing loss of 50-90 db
Less than 50 db
Special school
Special unit in regular school
Special unit and integrated class
Integrated class
Sign language

Figure 3. Forms of educational provision for mentally handicapped children

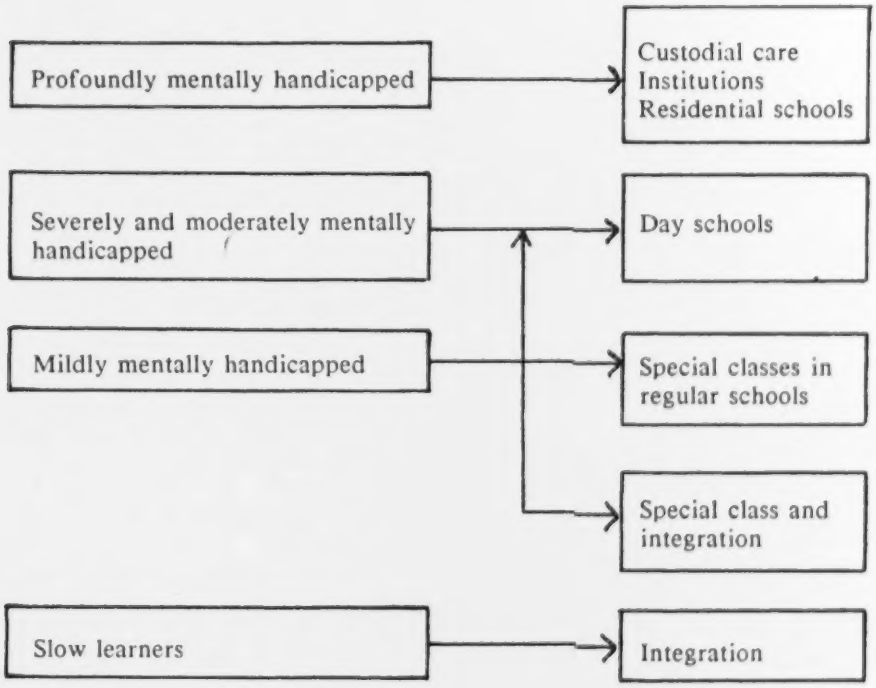


Figure 4. Forms of education provision for physically handicapped children

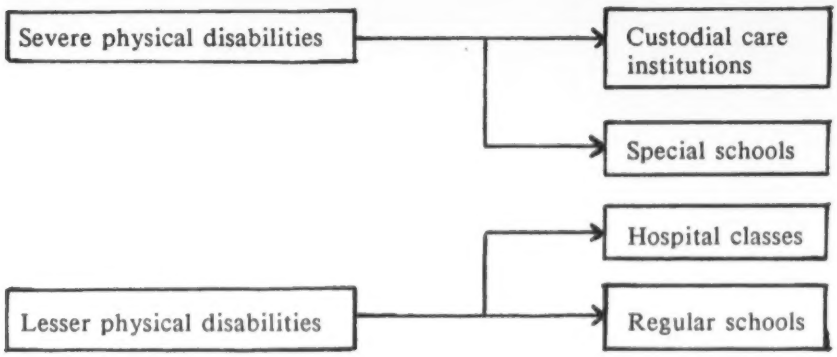


Figure 5. Forms of educational provision for maladjusted children

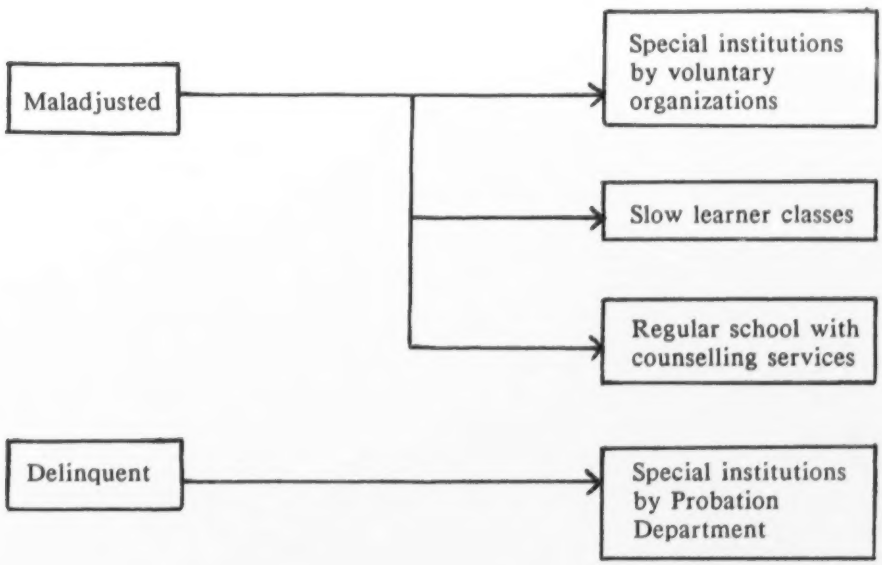
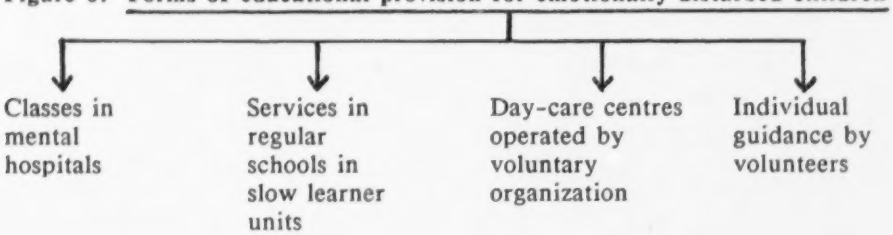


Figure 6. Forms of educational provision for emotionally disturbed children


Classes in mental hospitals
Services in regular schools in slow learner units
Day-care centres operated by voluntary organization
Individual guidance by volunteers

IV.3 Other related services

The Ministry of Education provides the following services:

- provision of all school textbooks in Braille;
- provision of free spectacles for school children;
- guidance services on mental health to schools in pilot regions through trained teacher counsellors and visiting psychologists from the University Faculties of Medicine and Psychiatry;
- mobile audiometric testing services to special units in regular schools, and regional audiometric testing units in pilot regions;
- provision of low-vision aids to needy children and individual hearing aids to needy children.

IV.4 Statistical data pertaining to special education provision

Education of visually-handicapped children

- 290 integrated programmes by itinerant teachers in 20 of the 24 administrative districts;
- 10 special schools (assisted by the Ministry of Education) in 10 districts;
- a regular two-year training programme for teachers has been available since 1968; the intake for 1986 was 25.

Education of hearing-impaired children

- 79 special units in regular schools serviced by 98 specialist teachers and spread over 17 districts;
- 13 special schools (assisted by the Ministry of Education) spread over 13 districts;
- 3 private institutions in the city of Colombo;
- a regular two-year training programme for teachers has been available since 1972; the intake for 1986 was 30.

Education of mentally handicapped children

- 38 special units in regular schools spread over 7 administrative districts;
- 5 special schools (assisted by the Ministry of Education) spread over 4 districts;
- special institutions (many by private agencies);

- a regular two-year training programme for teachers was initiated in 1986 with an intake of 35 trainees. Earlier, two groups of graduate teachers had been given one year of training.

Education of slow learners

- 110 special units in regular schools spread over 16 districts;
- short-term in-service training is provided annually for primary teachers in regular schools.

Education of physically handicapped children

- 3 integrated programmes in ordinary schools;
- 2 hospital classes serviced by itinerant teachers;
- 5 special schools (assisted by the Ministry of Education) spread over 4 districts;
- in-service training has been provided by foreign medical personnel and physiotherapists.

IV.5 Curriculum for disabled children

There is considerable flexibility in the adaptation of the curriculum for normal children to suit the needs of the handicapped children. The situation with regard to different categories is indicated below.

Visually handicapped children. The curriculum for non-disabled children is followed throughout the educational system. However, the following changes have been implemented:

- additional components in sensory training and mobility training for blind and low-vision children;
- the mathematics syllabus for the G.C.E. (Ordinary Level) examination has been changed so as to exempt blind children from certain sections pertaining to geometry;
- special schools provide a vocationally oriented curriculum for blind children.

Hearing handicapped children. The normal curriculum is followed wherever possible. Certain children sit for the G.C.E. (Ordinary Level) examination without any change in syllabus. Such children follow the normal curriculum throughout their school careers. Additional components in auditory training and speech training are included at primary level. It is

planned to teach sign language to deaf children in the near future (for this purpose a common sign language is being developed). A special curriculum is also implemented in special schools for primary classes. The special school authorities have the option of using either the normal curriculum or the special curriculum based on the needs and abilities of the individual child. The special curriculum developed for deaf children has not been revised for the last eight years and it is planned to revise and re-design it to meet changing requirements. Curriculum development for deaf children has been given particular attention by the Special Education Unit and a curriculum development committee will be appointed to go into the matter.

Mentally handicapped children. A special curriculum is being implemented for mentally handicapped children since 1985. Emphasis has been laid on the following aspects: training in self-help skills; teaching the spoken language; development of social skills; and development of pre-vocational skills.

IV.6 Responsibility for development of curricula

The development of curricula for education is the responsibility of the Curriculum Development Centre of the Ministry of Education. However, with regard to special education, the Special Education Unit undertakes this responsibility. Advice and guidance are sought from the Curriculum Development Centre. Resources for special schools and integrated programmes are generally mobilized by periodically designing suitable curricula.

IV.7 Services before the compulsory school period

Generally speaking, the care of children before school age is the responsibility of the Ministry of Health. Treatment is provided through the network of general hospitals, base hospitals, rural hospitals and dispensaries. The Ministry of Health also provides a preventive service through a network of medical health officers, sanitary inspectors and family health workers. Children's disabilities are mostly detected before school age at a health centre or by a survey team.

In cases detected, parental guidance is provided by health personnel. There is no structure by which the information available to the health authorities is communicated to the educational authorities. This lack of co-

ordination prevents the early educational training of the handicapped children detected at health centres. The Ministry of Education has taken the following measures to serve handicapped pre-school children.

- A survey of handicapped children for educational placement in new educational programmes is carried out annually. The children detected are referred to the medical authorities for medical or preventive treatment and the educational personnel then takes the appropriate action to promote educational treatment.
- Provision of home counselling services for pre-school visually handicapped children.
- Provision of educational facilities by reducing the age limit to 3 years for school admission has been instituted in a few schools on an experimental basis.

Voluntary organizations also provide services as follows: establishment of pre-school classes; provision of aids and appliances; and parental guidance at centres.

IV.8 Services after the compulsory school period

Higher studies. The eligibility requirements for Sri Lanka universities are very strict and admission is highly competitive. Special privileges are, however, extended to handicapped children in respect of higher studies. Every year a few handicapped youths enter universities to follow degree courses in arts, commerce, languages and law.

Vocational training. The following services are available:

- Vocational training in special institutes organized by the Social Services Department. The deaf and blind can follow a variety of courses in vocational training, ranging from traditional handicrafts to modern technology. Trainees in these institutes are paid a stipend by the Social Services Department. However, technical colleges and technical institutes are still not open to handicapped youths.
- Voluntary associations have also taken an interest in establishing vocational centres for handicapped children. Training in simple activities is provided for mentally handicapped youth in a few such centres.
- Another scheme recently implemented provides handicapped children with sufficient training and financial assistance to start self-earning

projects. Financial assistance is made available by a Swedish organization for the handicapped.

The matter of services for the handicapped after the compulsory school period requires urgent attention since the motivation for formal education has a bearing on future employment prospects. Serious unemployment in the country prevents handicapped youths from securing employment in a competitive market. The voluntary organizations and business establishments have a very important role to play in this respect. The Ministry of Education has employed almost all blind graduates as teachers in ordinary schools. This may be the highest number employed by a single Ministry.

IV.9 Health, psychological and advisory teaching services

Health care is available to school-going handicapped children under the normal health services through child health units in provincial hospitals and rural hospitals. Specialist consultation services are concentrated in major towns.

As a general rule, specialist teachers ensure that handicapped children in school programmes are examined by physicians in government hospitals. As medical services are not regularly provided for the school system, parents are responsible for seeking medical attention for their children.

The services of psychologists are not provided on a regular basis for the school system. As an alternative, senior teachers are trained in mental health problems and are released for a few hours a week for counselling such children. The Family Health Bureau is currently making arrangements to train a few teachers in mental health in each school in the pilot areas. In addition, special education supervisors are given additional training to deal with childrens' needs in the course of their visits for supervision of special education programmes.

Specialist teachers have the opportunity of seeking advice from the special education supervisors.

In certain private schools for severely mentally handicapped children, the services of medical and psychiatric personnel are available on a voluntary basis.

IV.10 Teacher training for special education

The following teacher training facilities are available in Sri Lanka for teachers of non-handicapped children:

- pre-service training in 6 Colleges of Education (duration: 3 years);
- regular teacher training for non-trained teachers (duration: 2 years);
- distance training for non-trained teachers (duration: 3 years);
- pre-service training for new recruits to the teaching profession (duration: 20 days).
- post-graduate courses of education at universities and at the National Institute of Education.

All teachers are expected to possess a general understanding of disabilities so as to be able to impart knowledge efffectively. In all teacher training courses, trainees are expected to take educational psychology as a compulsory subject. The component on special education is included in the content of this subject.

In addition, for their dissertations at the end of the course, trainees are expected to prepare a study of a problem child based on an actual case. These components provide opportunities for all teachers undergoing training to acquire knowledge of the type of disabilities in children that may be encountered in the school situation.

The 20-day pre-service training for new recruits to the teaching profession includes a comparatively important element on the education of disabled children.

Teacher training in special education. The following specialist teacher training courses are available on a regular basis:

- education of visually handicapped children (duration: 2 years);
- education of hearing-impaired children (duration: 2 years);
- education of the mentally handicapped (duration: 2 years).

Applicants for training must be teachers in a regular school/assisted special school/private special school and must not have received any previous professional training at a teachers' college. In addition, applicants must be under 45 years of age. The selection is based on an interview at which special consideration is given to the following areas: attitudes towards the handicapped; participation in voluntary organizational work; and special aptitudes. Experience over the last 20 years has shown that the quality of training meets the needs of the school system.

The curriculum for teacher training has two major components: special knowledge content (courses on the speciality concerned); and professional knowedge content (educational psychology, principles of education, physical and health education, education of exceptional children, and aesthetics). Adequate opportunities exist to gain practical experiences in teaching and to observe teaching by experienced specialist teachers.

IV.11 Pre-qualification for training

There is very little difference in pre-qualification for training in special education and regular teaching. Academic qualifications are the same in both cases although proficiency in English is considered an added qualification since the relevant literature and reading material is limited in the national language. The Ministry of Education recognizes qualifications of all trained teachers as equal, specialized or otherwise. Teachers of the handicapped are entitled to an additional allowance. Their teaching is restricted to small groups of children whereas teachers of non-handicapped children take larger classes in a number of grades. The situation that existed 10 years back was far from satisfactory but the social barriers to acceptance are gradually being eradicated. The trend is largely a result of the expansion of integrated programmes in the country.

IV.12 Contemplated changes in teacher training

The current problem facing the Ministry of Education is the shortage of trained teachers to expand educational provisions for all handicapped children in the community. It is planned to conduct the following training courses so as to increase the output of teachers in the field of special education: increased in-take for teacher training; one-month short-term training for 500 teachers per year to teach children with special needs on a part-time basis. It is also planned to revise the curricula for teacher training so as to provide more practical skills for teachers. Emphasis on the following areas is contemplated:

In respect of the visually handicapped

- mobility training (use of the long cane);
- training in use of low-vision aids;
- preparation of tactile maps and pictures;
- abacus training;

- specialized methods in the teaching of mathematics and science;
- a Braille code in music.

In respect of the hearing impaired

- speech therapy;
- audiometry;
- sign language;
- repair of equipment.

V. FINANCE

Expenditure on education in 1985 by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education amounted to 7.5 per cent of total budget expenditure. If training programmes under other Ministries are included, total expenditure probably amounts to around 9 per cent of the budget.

Total expenditure on special education, however, has not been estimated. Financial commitments by State departments and other organizations are shown below in respect of different educational provisions for the disabled.

Integrated programmes. The Ministry of Education meets the total financial commitment for all services in integrated programmes as indicated below:

- provision of infrastructure;
- payment of salaries of teachers;
- payment of incentive allowances for teachers;
- provision of teaching materials to teachers;
- provision of free books;
- provision of free Braille books for blind children;
- provision of aids, e.g. low-vision aids, spectacles, hearing aids, etc.;
- payment of travelling allowances for itinerant teachers;
- full cost of teacher training (long-term specialist training);
- in-service training.

The families of handicapped children incur only the cost of their clothing and upkeep. Travelling by bus or train to school is subsidized by the State, a privilege enjoyed by all school-going children.

Special schools registered as assisted schools under the Ministry of Education. The financial commitments of the Ministry of Education are as follows:

- payment of salaries of approved teaching staff;
- payment of a maintenance grant and stationary grant calculated on the number of children;
- full cost of teacher training;
- payment of the salaries of substitutes when an approved teacher is on full-pay study leave;
- provision of free books;
- provision of free Braille books for blind children;
- allowance for vocational training.

The Social Service Department makes the following contributions:

- payment of a grant for children resident in the school-hostel (the Boards of Management of these schools organize their own fund raising and also receive foreign assistance - some of these institutions are financially stable);

Private special schools or homes. The Ministry of Education contributes the teacher training and provides free textbooks. These institutions are largely dependent on donations and assistance from both local and foreign sources. Some homes charge a fee.

Contributions from foreign countries and United Nations agencies

Under a five-year agreement the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) is funding the Ministry of Education in the areas of staff development, development of a sign language, and establishment of a resource centre for special education. SHIA has assisted the Ministry of Education in the establishment of a Braille press and funds from SIDA are available to maintain and run the press. JICA has assisted in-service training programmes for teachers of hearing-impaired children. UNICEF funds are provided for a programme of early detection, identification and educational rehabilitation of handicapped children in the community (implemented on a phased-out basis in three pilot areas).

VI. RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Special education being a recent development, no research has been undertaken by educational research units except for one or two conducted by the Special Education Unit, e.g. on the causes and incidence of slow learners in primary schools. The special education administrators at present concentrate most of their resources on the following:

- expansion of special educational programmes to meet the needs of the most handicapped children (for certain categories of handicapped children in the Unesco classification, no programmes have as yet been established);
- the growing need for special educational programmes as a result of increased awareness on the part of the community and the services required for staff development. The expansion of programmes can only be achieved by increasing the trained personnel in special education. Quantitative development has become an urgent necessity.

The shortage of research workers in special education likewise hinders research institutions which, except for survey reports and analyses of the incidence of disabilities, have been unable to conduct any in-depth research on alternative methods for the qualitative development of special education.

The following are pre-requisites for the implementation of research programmes: trained research workers; motivation by educational planners; co-operation of higher educational institutions; and funds for research.

A few medium-scale research surveys have been carried out by the Special Education Unit. One such consists of community-based and school-based surveys to locate and rehabilitate disabled children in three pilot regions covering a population of over 500,000. A survey to determine the causes and incidence of slow learners in primary schools is another significant medium-scale project.

Voluntary organizations may be classified as follows: organizations for the welfare of the disabled; organizations of the disabled; and organizations of parents of disabled children. Numerous organizations have been created throughout the country with welfare of disabled persons as an objective. This reflects an increased awareness and acceptance of the rights of the disabled and an appreciation of their capabilities.

A few organizations provide valuable services for the welfare of disabled persons in society. They are designed to supplement the services of State agencies and other institutions.

The National Council for the Deaf provides: school services for some deaf children; audiometric-testing services; training of some deaf youths in traditional crafts; a meeting place for deaf adults; pre-school education for deaf children.

The Sri Lanka Council for the Blind provides promotion of job placement and a meeting place for blind youths.

The Ceylon Association for the Mentally Retarded provides: management of certain residential institutions for mentally handicapped children; vocational training facilities for mentally handicapped youths; publication of a newsletter; short in-service training courses for the staff in homes; parent counselling services.

The Sukhita Welfare Society for the Mentally Retarded provides institutional training for mentally handicapped children and vocational training for mentally handicapped youths.

The National Council for the Blind, the National Council for the Deaf and the Ceylon Association for the Mentally Retarded were pioneer national organizations established to provide services at a time when the State agencies had not developed such services. Their services, however, are limited and restricted to major towns, the State having already assumed responsibility for the education of handicapped children.

Voluntary associations of the disabled

There are several voluntary associations of the physically disabled and the blind. A new organization, the Central Council for the Disabled, has been formed mainly by physically handicapped people.

The Association of Physically Disabled Technicians organizes periodical workshops to enable its members to improve their professional skills, etc.

Except for the dissemination of information and the promotion of awareness of the rights of the handicapped through the mass media, the impact of some of these organizations of the disabled remains to be seen. However, they could exert a considerable influence on policy-makers in connection with the welfare of the handicapped. The handicapped sections

of society are not yet sufficiently organized to be a driving force for new innovations in the field of special education.

Parents

Until very recently, perhaps until expansion of the integrated programme for the handicapped, the problem of handicapped people was not appreciated by the community. The reasons underlying this situation were probably as follows: lack of access to education; ignorance of parents with regard to the educability of handicapped children; tendency of parents to hide and/or extend over-protection to handicapped persons; and rejection by the community at large.

Conditions have markedly improved. Educational opportunities are increasingly made available under the integrated programmes and parental awareness has been stimulated by State institutions, voluntary associations and the public media. Community acceptance has replaced rejection. Parents' associations indicate that parents are increasingly concerned with the welfare of handicapped persons. These organizations are consulted in the following areas:

Assessment and educational planning. Parents are directly involved in assessment procedures. They accompany their children and furnish relevant medical and para-medical information for educational screening by the specialist teacher. The child's history is recorded by the teacher from information provided by parents who also give their approval to the educational placement. There have been instances where parents insist that education for their severely visually handicapped children should involve utilizing residual vision to read print and their requests are acceded to since, in the course of time, they understand the situation and adopt a more flexible attitude.

Contribution by parents in the pre-school period. Guidance services are conducted by most of the educational programmes to provide parents with the basic skills and knowledge needed to prepare their children for formal education. Itinerant teachers of visually handicapped children furnish these services when visiting homes.

With regard to other categories of children, such basic training is provided individually or in groups at educational institutions or health

centres and wherever community-based rehabilitation projects are implemented.

Under the integrated programme, surveys are conducted by trained teachers and volunteers to locate disabled pre-school and school-age children in schools and in the community.

Counselling of parents is then provided and preventive measures are taken. Children suitable for special education are placed in the appropriate schools and such aids as low-vision aids, wheelchairs and crutches are provided by individual donors or organizations, including the Departments of Education and Social Services.

Parents' contribution to the development of programmes. In every school, there is a School Development Society of which parents, including parents of handicapped children, become members. As the name implies, the society is expected to help the school authorities to develop infrastructure programmes and to provide the necessary amenities. The parents of handicapped children can influence the society to provide for the needs of the special integrated units. There are instances where parents of disabled children have formed separate associations to satisfy the specific needs of special integrated programmes.

In integrated units, parents accompany their handicapped children to school and help special teachers in extracurricular activities.

The right of parents to know of any disabilities from which their children may suffer is emphasized in Article 9 of the Parent's Charter issued by the Ministry of Education. It reads as follows:

'Parents have the right to be informed immediately of any physical or mental weakness of the child, whether apparent or revealed at a medical examination, as well as to admit the handicapped and the backward child to schools or special institutions where educational opportunities are provided for them to gain their rightful place in society as useful citizens'.

VII. PRIORITIES

Teacher training is considered the top priority of today. The expansion of services has been hindered by a lack of specialized trained teachers and of related specialized personnel, e.g. audiologists and technicians. Available

resources are being mobilized in this connection. Intensive detection programmes for school placement are likewise a priority concern.

Issues

The introduction of technical aids and equipment for special education. The new technological equipment used in the developed countries is gradually being introduced into Sri Lanka. Certain special schools catering to a few privileged children have obtained equipment of this kind through foreign aid associations. Requests by parental organizations have been made to the Ministry of Education to provide such equipment to integrated programmes. Even setting aside the problem of priorities, however, the question arises as to whether it is appropriate for such technology to be introduced throughout the country, although the trend is undoubtedly in this direction.

The integration of various responsibilities into the normal administration of education. Special education needs the same administrative structures as normal education respecting admission, curriculum development, provision of special equipment and textbooks (including Braille textbooks for blind children), conduct of examinations to determine attainment levels, supervision and management. Can the regular education system cater to the special needs of handicapped children? Will such an integrated administrative structure lead to the neglect of handicapped children insofar as they form only a small fraction of school-going children? Should a separate organization be developed in different divisions of the normal administrative structure?

Early intervention programme. Should early intervention programmes for detection, identification and rehabilitation of disabled children be attempted under special education? There is no adequate arrangement to locate and educate handicapped children who need special education services through community-based programmes.

Teacher training. Should the training of teachers be comprehensive so as to produce the ability to teach two or more types of handicapped children? In the future expansion of the integrated educational programmes, a teacher should be able not only to meet the educational needs of different handicapped children in a particular school but also to investigate other needs so that the child's whole personality develops.

Teacher recruitment for special education. The trend today is to provide pre-service training for teachers of non-handicapped children. Seven colleges of education already conduct 3-year courses for new recruits to the teaching profession. Alternatively, as has already been done in two regions, children with disabilities might be identified in school and in the community and, depending on their requirements, regular teachers be given short-term in-service training and possibly long-term training at a later date.

It is desirable that all teachers undergoing training should accede to a component in special education to enable them to detect and identify disabilities in children. Such a component would also equip teachers with the considerable knowledge required in dealing with slow learners. Can such a system be developed successfully?

Employment placement. Employment opportunities in the extremely competitive labour market are very limited as regards educated handicapped persons. The Ministry of Education has already employed a high number of blind graduates as teachers in regular schools. Many blind and other handicapped persons, however, are unemployed so that pre-vocational and vocational training may be introduced for the handicapped in regular schools as well as special schools.

Curriculum development. The recent introduction of sign language has become an issue. The parents of hearing-impaired children in integrated units have expressed alarm at the development of sign language whereas deaf adults hold the view that it will help improve communication skills. Professionals also hold the opinion that the deaf will need to adopt signs to further their educational and social needs.

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